

This review (June 2012) pertains to the manuscript of the book later published as:

Blažeka, Đuro and Grozdana Rob. *Rječnik Murskog Središća* [Dictionary of the Dialect of Mursko Središće]. Zagreb: Učiteljski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2014.

## Pre-publication review of *Rječnik govora Murskog Središća*, by Đuro Blažeka and Grozdana Rob

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In the context of the study of Slavic languages, both from synchronic and diachronic viewpoints, the rich variety of dialect variation found in the South Slavic languages yields arguably some of the most important information for the typologist and historical linguist. Croatian is among those South Slavic languages that proffers the most variation, which is the foundation for linguistic study that provides new insight both to the Slavic languages, the Indo-European language family, and to the study of language in general. Despite this embarrassment of riches, Croatian language study, including dialectology, has focused primarily on the part that has lesser variation—the Štokavian dialect—which became so important for the nation-building project of Croatia.<sup>1</sup> It is precisely its relative uniformity that made this dialect the ideal vehicle for a national standard language. For complementary reasons, the Kajkavian dialect is among the richest sources of comparative material and yet, for extra-linguistic reasons it has remained among the least studied. Moreover, within the Kajkavian dialect area, the Međimurje dialect has remained, until quite recently, a veritable *terra incognita*, barring occasional sketches of its general structural features. The most comprehensive type of works to treat dialect systems are, first, dialect dictionaries and, second, atlases. To this number we can add the recent publication of *Rječnik pomurskih Hrvata* (2009) by Drs. Blažeka, Nyomarkáy, and Rácz—a dictionary of Međimurski dialect as spoken in Hungary—and the proposed new dictionary by Dr. Blažeka and Ms. Rob. As of yet we are still far from having a published atlas of Kajkavian dialects, but until that time arrives we can assemble the picture of diatopic variation in Kajkavian dialects through descriptive works, such as the sketches of dialects in article form as well as in dialect dictionaries. I will focus the remaining remarks on the new dictionary by Blažeka and Rob, *Rječnik govora Murskog Središća* (hereafter RGMS).

### Contextualization

After a brief sketch of the historical and geographical position of the dialect, a detailed description of the dialects classificatory and diachronic features, focusing especially on phonology and accentuation, place the dialect in the traditional classificatory scheme in Croatian dialect studies. This part of the work, which also includes a substantial bibliography,

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<sup>1</sup> In this regard Croatian dialectology has recently been enriched by a number of valuable dialect dictionaries, e.g., Ivan Večenaj and Mijo Lončarić, *Rječnik Gole* (Kajkavian, 1997); Ferdinan Takač, *Rječnik sela Hrvatski Grob* (Kajkavian/Ikavian 2004); Ante Sekulić, *Rječnik govora bačkih Hrvata* (Štokavian Ikavian, 2005); Stjepan Belović and Đuro Blažeka, *Rječnik govora Svetog Đurđa* (Kajkavian 2009), to name just a few that are of similar thoroughness to the dictionary under review. This is not a small undertaking; indeed, it represents a veritable renaissance of Croatian dialectological lexicography for which future generations will be indebted for collecting this precious information before it is lost to the leveling effects of education, urbanization, and globalization.

numbers 30 pages single-spaced. The system of vowels, consonants, and suprasegmental features are discussed structurally and also related diatopically to Prekmurje Slovene, which has clear historical similarities to as well as differences from Međimurje Croatian (the author has referred to some of my work in this vein).

Ideally, I would suggest that some additional attention be given to filling out this section, especially where there are opportunities to provide a fuller picture of the place of the Mursko Središće dialect in relation to other localities in Međimurje proper (e.g., Greenberg 2005) and bordering areas other than Prekmurje (e.g., Greenberg 1999) where close structural and historical relations may also be discerned. References to non-Croatian contributions to Kajkavian dialectology, especially fundamental ones that discuss the development of Kajkavian in context and in a comprehensive manner, are lacking (e.g., Vermeer 1983, Greenberg 2000). Making these connections will bring the historical and descriptive part of this RGMS up to the state-of-the art.

### The dictionary

The dictionary part of the RGMS is designed with the following features:

(1) Entries are supplied with headwords in **BOLD ALL CAPS** in an orthographic representation, which more or less follows the orthographic principles of standard Croatian orthography. Thus, in Figure 1 we can see that **GOLOB** 'golub' is represented with the morphophonemic information that identifies the stem-final consonant as /b/, and ignores the neutralization of utterance-final voiced obstruents for voicing, which is made explicit in the paradigmatic information that follows the headword, e.g., [gʊlʲb̩p gʊlʲba].

(2) The morphophonemic principle operates only within word paradigms, as derivations in which the morphophonemic alternation is neutralized are rendered with the neutralized phoneme as basic, e.g., **GOLOPČEK** instead of \***GOLOBČEK**. Moreover, some morphophonemic information is lost in the orthographic representation, so, for example, the orthographic representation **O** can refer to two possible phonemes, either /o/ or /ou/: **GOLOČA** → [gʊlʲt͡ʃa] but **GOLOPČEK** → [gʊlʲopčɛk]. The advantage to this practice is that the user may more readily identify the word in question; a possible disadvantage is that the user may overlook the peculiarity of the dialect's phoneme inventory until s/he digs deeper into the entry. This is not necessarily a shortcoming, since the relevant information is found both in the descriptive section and in the material presented in phonetic detail in the lexicographical article. Somewhat oddly, the orthographic representation is fastidious and, in this regard is at variance with Croatian orthographic practice, in other places. So, for example, we find **ALTSTRIJA** and **ALTO** for 'Austria' and 'automobile', respectively, which accounts for the non-syllabic [ɹ] realization of /l/ in syllable-coda position of diphthongs ('Aʊstrija and 'aʊtɹ), which contrasts with the type **AUSPUH** or **AUSTRALIJA** ([ʼaʊspʰuh, Aʊstrʼalija), the first syllables of which contain, evidently, combinations of independent phonemes /a/ + /u/. These examples, while demonstrating an internal inconsistency, nevertheless indicate the authors' attention to detail, which is of utmost importance in dialect studies. If this inconsistency were to be addressed, the ideal solution would be to add full specification of phonemic contrasts in the orthographic representation, e.g., **GOLOUČA** instead of **GOLOČA**, and to include

morphophonemic information to replace phonetic detail, e.g., **GOLOBČEK** instead of **GOLOPČEK**.

(3) Grammatical categories are given in italics, e.g., *pl. 3. g'ljijū se, imp. g'ljī se, part. perf. act. g'ljijū se /g'ljijo se, g'ljila se, g'ljilū se, sup. g'ljīt se*, and, crucially, in their Latin (e.g., *pl.*) rather than Croatian (e.g., *mn.*) form, which makes the dictionary easier to use by non-Croatian readers.


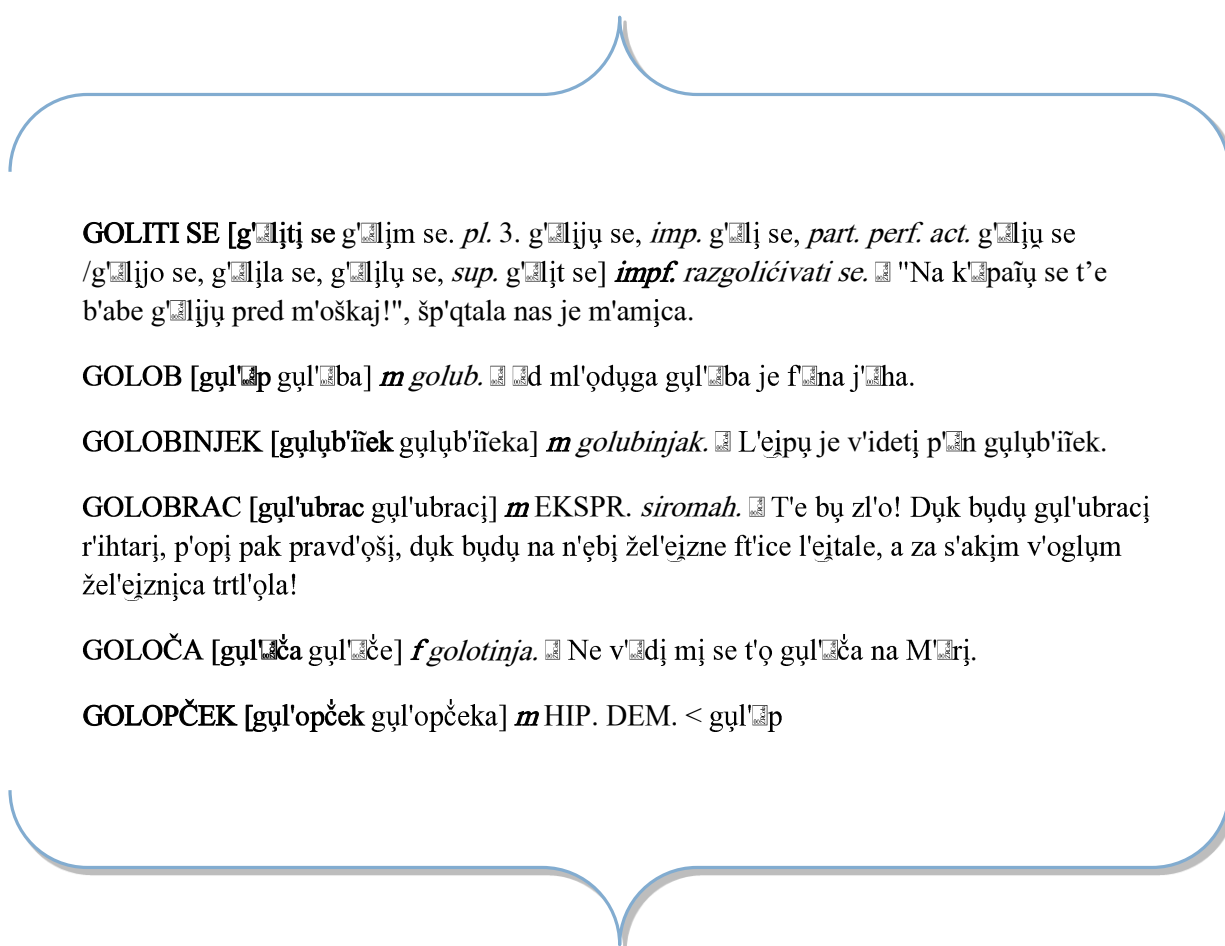
(4) Examples of usage are marked by  and their presence is an invaluable feature of the dictionary, as such material not only provides examples of usage, but also helps to make precise the semantics of the word in question: standard Croatian glosses and explanations, with are essential, are likely to miss semantic subtleties inherent in the dialect; moreover, in general, semantics are always determined by context and can never be adequately defined through positive definition.

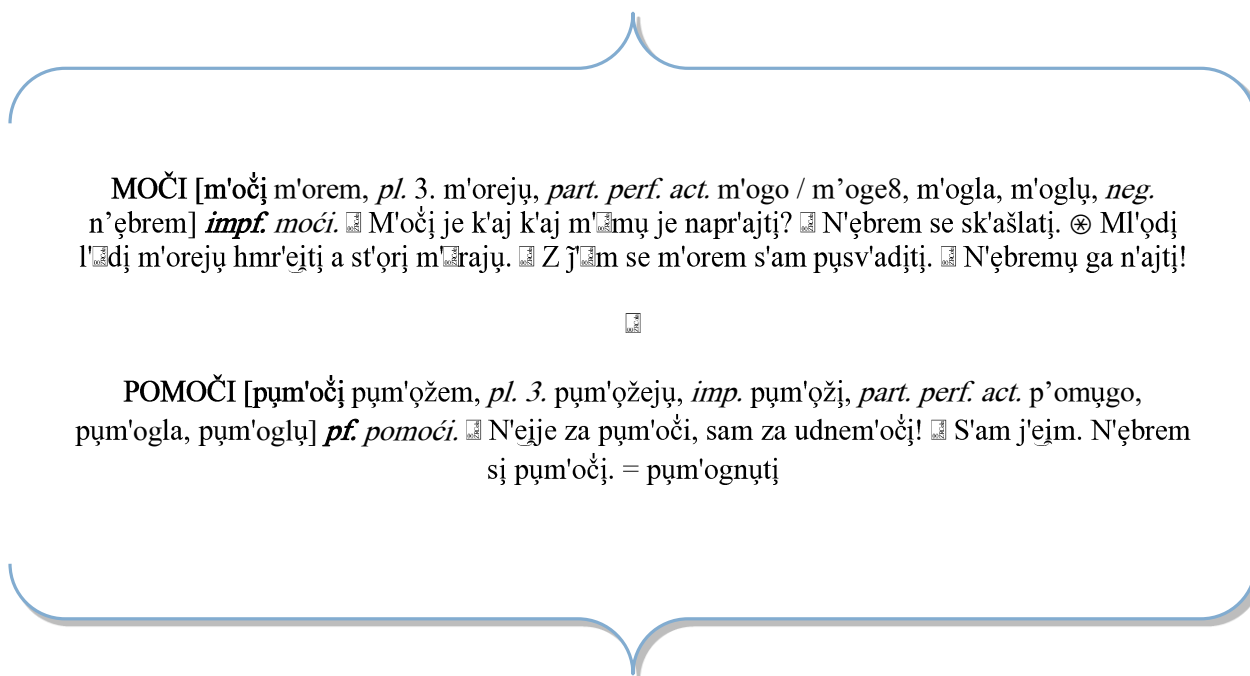
Figure 1



As was mentioned above, one of the central issues in collecting and publishing dialectological lexicons is to capture the extraordinary variation found in dialects, which make up the fundamental material of linguistic analysis for numerous problems of interpretation. Skimming through the material I quickly came upon data that shed new light or give greater texture to perennial problems in South Slavic dialectology. So, for example, in Figure 2 we learn that in addition to the expected variation between the positive *morem* 'I can' and the

negative *nemrem* (*nebrem*), which are widely known throughout Kajkavian and Slovene Pannonian dialects, we find also the compound without “rhotacism” *pomožem*, a fact that will have to be taken into account in future refinements of the theory of rhotacism (i.e., is this a lexical borrowing from another dialect or an internal development—the matter remains to be explained).

Figure 2



The aforementioned example is but the tip of the iceberg. As I thumb through the dictionary I find many dozens of words that had hitherto been unfamiliar to me. I shall not embarrass myself by revealing what to native Kajkavian speaker may be widely-known quotidian words and phrases, but I daresay that among these are many unique lexical items that will no doubt be made evident to the linguistic community for the very first time.

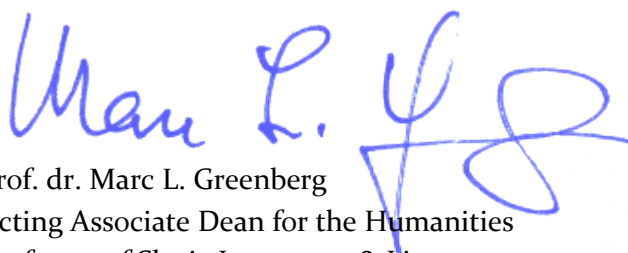
## Conclusion

RGMS promises to be a major and exceptionally valuable contribution to Croatian and Slavic dialect lexicography. Its authors are to be commended for the thorough analysis, description, and historical contextualization of the material, as well as the copious presentation of lexicographical material. The publication of this material will enrich our understanding of the significant variation found in the Kajkavian dialect and, specifically, deepen our knowledge of the Međimurje dialect in particular, which has eluded thorough description and lexicographical treatment until very recently (and in large part thanks to the efforts of Dr. Blažeka). The publication of this dictionary will be of utmost importance to the scholarly community and should also be a top priority for the interest of preserving artifacts of Croatian national heritage of which dialect variation ought to be counted in the first order. It is imperative that this important work be published as soon as it is feasible to do so.

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Lawrence, Kansas, USA, 10 June 2012



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